



Building the WABA Strategic Plan.



WBW 1993, Toronto, organised by Penny Van Esterik.

WABA has helped to shape the global breastfeeding agenda among many actors, and across a range of themes. The theme of each WBW is selected based on consultations and discussions between the WABA Steering Committee, Core Partners, Task Forces and Regional Focal Points. Key writers selected for their expertise or specialisation in specific thematic areas shine the global spotlight on important issues, and develop creative ideas for mass mobilisation. The global community is then encouraged to address these issues, create awareness, and take action.

Over the years, the WBW themes have covered a variety of breastfeeding issues and related contexts relevant for global breastfeeding advocacy. These include healthcare systems, women's employment, women's work, the marketing practices of breastmilk-substitute companies, national laws and practices on the marketing of breastmilk-substitutes, community action, ecology, economy, science, education, communication, youth and human rights.

WBW campaigns increased global awareness and action on specific issues. The campaigns also strengthened and brought cohesion to the global breastfeeding movement. As an annual week-long event, WBW provides a common platform for action and a shared identity among groups and individuals who are otherwise not directly connected. It has provided an opportunity for governments to reach out and engage with national breastfeeding organisations and community groups. WBW is endorsed annually by WHO and UNICEF and, depending on the themes, by FAO, ILO and global health associations such as the International Pediatric Association (IPA) and the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM).

*“I observe that one of the things that struck me from the first WBW—and has been confirmed, I think by a truly global experience – is that WBW is truly a bottom up approach to transforming societies through reflection and action, to creating a truly global consciousness about the importance of breastfeeding. WBW is literally a universal opportunity for plain folk to make their voices heard and to help shape a saner global environment.”*

*– James Akre, formerly of WHO's Nutrition Section*